

Lesson Plan

Playing Possum

Book: *Opossums*

Series: Neighborhood Safari

Level: Pioneer

Objective

To help students understand how opossums avoid predators.

Supplies

- *Opossums* book
- An open area for a group game

Before the Activity

Read the *Opossums* book out loud to students.

Activity

Opossums play dead to stay safe from predators. Ask students to describe what happens to an opossum's body when it plays dead, prompting them to look at pages 16 and 17 of the book if they get stuck. (Answers: The opossum's body goes limp. Its tongue sticks out. It gives off a bad smell.)

Next, have students gather in the open area to play a group game based on these ideas. Students should sit in a circle. Choose one student to be the "Scientist." This student should go out into the hall while you choose a different student to be the Predator. The rest of the students in the circle are Opossums.

After choosing the Predator, call the student who is the Scientist back into the room. Have the Scientist stand in the middle of the circle. Explain that the Scientist gets three tries to guess which student is the Predator. The Scientist can turn slowly around the circle to try to catch the Predator in action. Meanwhile, the Predator will try to make all the Opossums play dead. To make an Opossum play dead, the Predator must make eye contact with the Opossum and make a scary face, such as baring his or her teeth. As soon as the Predator does this, the Opossum must immediately flop over. But the Predator must be sneaky so he or she doesn't get caught by the Scientist. Each round lasts until the Scientist successfully identifies the Predator, the Scientist makes three incorrect guesses, or until the Predator makes all the Opossums play dead. To play again, send a different student out to be the Scientist and choose a new Predator.

Evaluation

Were students able to describe how an opossum's body changes when it plays dead? Did they act that out during the group game?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading standards for informational texts, grade 1 (RI 1.2, 1.3).